

## TV5 expose raises questions of intent

In exposing AP cabinet minister Shankar Rao accepting a bribe, is TV5 trying to hit back at him for uncovering the misdeeds of former CM the late YSR and his son Jaganmohan Reddy? C S H N MURTHY delves into the political leanings of channels that may have inspired this expose

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On September 28, 2011 TV 5 ran a story of Minister, [Shankar Rao, receiving a bribe](#) of Rs 10 lakh from a person who was aspiring to become a corporator in the last elections (2009) for the GHMC (Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation). The minister is in the cabinet of Chief Minister Kirankumar Reddy. The clippings were repeatedly shown and a public phone-in programme was also telecast. The persons present in the studio were Chandrasekhar, president of Greenfields Association and Jupudi Prabhakar Rao, a YSR Congress ideologue. Online were Nagarjuna, former Chairman, SC and ST Welfare Association and the public, mostly from Alwal constituency, who were fed up of the corrupt deals of Shankar Rao. Venkatakrishna, the anchor, repeatedly called upon Shankar Rao to express his views on the visuals but did not get a response. Most of the callers were from Alwal and Shadnagar constituencies. Shankar Rao represented Shadnagar during his earlier stint as Member of Legislative Assembly.

While this story was breaking on TV5, other channels such as ETV2, ETV, ABN-Andhra Jyothi and Gemini news, which have been in the forefront in exposing corruption, did not even mention the news. Surprisingly, there was no reaction from the government either despite the fact that a cabinet minister was being exposed.

Sakshi television channel had run a similar programme four days back on Shankar Rao's corruption. The programme was again in the form of a public phone in, interspersed with live visuals showing some members of Greenfields Association alleging blackmail by the Minister to seize their association's land worth several hundreds of crores. Incidentally Jupudi Prabhakara Rao, the MLC and the ideologue of the YSR Congress, was present in Sakshi studio that day. Further Sakshi was the only newspaper, that [reported this incident](#) in its September 29, 2011 edition. Neither Eenadu nor Andhra Jyothi published any news item related to this telecast.

One important question regarding this operation is whether TV5 will carry out such a sting operations against all politicians who are facing corruption charges. Why is it targeting Shankar Rao? Everyone knows that TV 5 runs as a proxy channel to Sakshi television. Of the 13 news channels in Andhra Pradesh some cover Jagan's speeches and his *odarpu yatra* (consolation trips). Chief among them is TV5 which describes him as *Yuvaneta* and YSR as *Mahaneta*, honorifics first created by Sakshi. After the filing of CBI cases against Jagan and the late YSR, pursuant to the directions of the high court, many television channels as well as print media have stopped giving him coverage.

To support this view is the fact that on September 6 TV5 dubbed the arrest of Gali Janardhan Reddy, the kingpin of the mining mafia of Karnataka and Andhra by the CBI, as being motivated by the Congress government. The CBI is conducting an

inquiry against Gali brothers' illegal mining in Obulapuram and consequent destruction of protected forest zones between Andhra and Karnataka borders at the instance of Supreme Court and the government of Andhra Pradesh. Brahmini Steels was founded by Jagan on the promise by Gali brothers that they would supply the iron ore for the factory.

It is well known that it was Shankar Rao who had sent a letter alleging corruption by YSR and Jagan prior to his becoming a Minister. Given Shankar Rao's [penchant for loose talk](#), [short temperament](#), and [frequent allegations of corruption against his fellow Ministers](#) in the current dispensation, Jagan and *Sakshi* might have tried to discredit him through this exposure which might consequently weaken his petition leveling charges against YS Jagan/YSR.

Besides, other media channels and government might not have taken the sting operation (showing Shankar Rao taking money) as corruption. Whether such an act falls within the definition of corruption under the Prevention of Corruption Act is doubtful. Corruption is defined as a 'public servant receiving gratification in cash or kind in lieu of an undue favor conferred on a person as a quid pro quo'. Apparently Shankar Rao had not shown any favour to the candidate. Finalization of candidates for GHMC is within the purview of the State Congress Committee President and the committee that he would constitute for the purpose might consider the recommendation of a local Minister from Alwal area as well.

While there can be doubts over Shankar Rao's act of taking money the manner in which TV5 tried to expose it has wider ramifications. The effort might be seen as an attempt to weaken the petition of Shankar Rao before the honorable high court of Andhra Pradesh and consequently help YS Jagan reestablish his credibility. If this interpretation carries weight with the people future exposures of corruption would be taken lightly.

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